A BATTLESHIP FOR PUBLIC HEALTH

A strange spectacle, indeed, to see all those nations which did not bankrupt themselves in the great war, now belaboring themselves with insane fury in the ardor of building and equipping and maintaining huge military armaments. Seldom have great social reforms been accomplished because they were morally right. Still less often have reforms in society or medicine been made effective because they contributed to health, happiness or goodness. The same truths are being demonstrated in the case of national disarmament. But now there enters the factor which has brought so many reforms to successful fruition, and which. after all other motives have failed, we may confidently hope will lead to actual international disarmament. Huge military establishments are found not to be a paying proposition in dollars and cents. The nation which pursues its military expansion much further, runs the almost certain risk of bankruptcy. Therefore, as this fact is beginning to sink into legislative bodies the world around, we may expect with assurance, that a disarmament program will shortly be in operation, not because it is right, not because of the crushing burden of a huge military on the people, but solely because it does not pay and leads to economic destruction.

As that day approaches, it would be a unique and beautifully American thing for Congress to turn the price of one battleship into constructive human public health work. Thirty or more millions increase, put at the disposal of a newlyorganized Department of Health would go a fair way to giving the average American citizen the same governmental encouragement to be healthy and live longer, that is now enjoyed by the hog, the cow and the sheep. A battleship for public health ought to be a winning slogan. Turn our destruction into conservation. Let a fraction of the toll of Mars flow into channels of peace and health. Moreover, where the rights of the case, the rights of the children and the sick and the endangered healthy, have apparently but little weight with our legislative bodies, the fact that such conversion of a battleship would pay in actual dollars ought to be convincing enough to encourage such legislation.

Instead of frenzied taxing for a huge armament, let us have a reasonable attention on the part of our law-makers to the demands, and rights,

and dividends of money invested in national health. Let us convert a battleship of steel and destruction, into a mighty engine of life and human construction.

EPIDEMIC SMALLPOX

The morbidity of smallpox has been increasing each year for the last four years until this year it is reaching alarming proportions, due no doubt to the large unvaccinated population growing up around us. Osler used to say that "the incidence of typhoid in a community reflects the sanitary intelligence of that community." This maxim could be even more aptly applied to smallpox, for in this disease we have an absolute means of prevention. Smallpox is excessively rare in an individual who had been successfully vaccinated as recently as within twelve years.

There has been one death from smallpox in the last four years at the San Francisco Hospital. Taken as a whole they are mostly discrete, mild cases, but, at times, more especially the adult contacts of these light cases come down with a confluent or semi-confluent type of the disease which leaves them disfigured for life. We may expect that if it is allowed to increase in morbidity it will also increase in virulence until we have a repetition of the frightful epidemics of the Middle Ages. There has already been noted an increase in the age incidence and a more severe type than those cases that occurred during October and November. It is a matter of experience with other diseases, that it is only necessary for an infection to pass through large numbers of susceptible individuals to increase in virulence and surely we are having a susceptible population growing up around us in the unvaccinated.

The appended chart of admissions to the San Francisco Isolation Hospital is self-explanatory and follows rather closely the morbidity chart of the California State Board of Health for a corresponding time, showing this is not a local problem but is state-wide in scope. It behooves every medical man at least to see that his patients are informed of the facts and of the present urgency of protective vaccination. Every child should be vaccinated not later than the end of its first year, and again when it enters school. After this, vaccination should be repeated when smallpox is epidemic or on the occasion of personal contact.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH San Francisco, Calif.

SMALLPOX-ADMITTED TO ISOLATION HOSPITAL

Year	Month	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
1917		1	38	26	13	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	82
1918		6	7	28	16	12	5	4	3	13	4	3	4	105
1919		11	26	54	16	19	17	12	9	5	2	2	13	186
1920		23	35	26	23	21	8	15	3	6	44	40	131	375
1971		230												